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14 June 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. COLBY

SUBJECT: The Uses of NIEs

At yesterday's MC session you put a rhetorical question which, freely rendered, went something like this: How can you justify a multi-billion dollar intelligence effort if Henry Kissinger doesn't read NIE's?

My response is that, highly desirable as it is to get HAK to thirst for NIE's and other prime finished intelligence, it does not follow that if he won't the effort is unjustified. It is well known that it is exceedingly difficult for the bureaucracy to please this customer. It is also well known that in this government it is extremely difficult to get any high level personage to read, not to mention effectively utilize, intelligence on a regular basis.

It goes without saying that we should try hard to write and merchandise our product in such ways as to engage the attention of such people. Jim Schlesinger is right when he says that NIE's ought to have such quality and repute that great men would be embarrassed to admit they hadn't read the NIE on a certain subject. But given the working style of most of our betters in this government we should not be too sanguine of high success. And we ought not to think that our effort goes for nothing if achievement in this regard is only partial.

Apart from the great men there is a whole body of people at what may be called the working policy level, say Assistant Secretaries and below. On a given subject at a given moment they may number in the hundreds or even thousands, and they are the ones, year in and year out, who make the wheels of policy action turn.



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In O/NE we have always regarded reaching this target audience as highly important and as justification for the intelligence effort. If policy is to be soundly conceived these people must be served with reliable information and analysis. Estimative judgments should help them acquire a sophisticated perception of foreign reality. Hopefully, at this working policy level a sound consensus will develop as to how to think about that reality and the policy choices open to the USG.

This I think is the way policy should get made and in fact mostly does get made. And, owing in considerable part to the intelligence effort, working level policy officials in this government are probably better informed than their counterparts in any other government.

We have considerable evidence, despite the inadequacy of feedback, that over the years we have reached this audience, sometimes very effectively, sometimes less so, depending on the quality and timeliness of a given product. Even under the NSSM system of recent years, which makes systematic intelligence inputs difficult, perhaps designedly, we know that many NSSM exercises have relied crucially on NIE's.

Attached is a paper which compiles what we know about reactions to and uses of some NIE's produced recently. It will please you to read that in some cases these papers actually were read by high-level personages, even including HAK.

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JOHN HUIZENGA
Director
National Estimates


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Reactions on the Policy Side to some of the National Intelligence Estimates Produced in the first half of 1973

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1. [redacted]

Dean has also reported that he and others in the Office of the Secretary and Under Secretary regarded two other recent NIE's as particularly helpful: NIE 12-72 The USSR and the Changing Scene in Europe (26 Oct 72) [redacted]

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2. NIE 12-72. The USSR and the Changing Scene in Europe. (26 Oct 72) Though produced back in October 1972, copies of this estimate were requested in early 1973 by Martin Hillenbrand, now US Ambassador in Bonn and then Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and by U. Alexis Johnson, now head of the US delegation at SALT, and then Under Secretary of State. At the time of request Hillenbrand and Johnson were preparing for conferences in Europe.

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4. NIE 11-9-73. The Soviet Approach to Summit II. (1 June 73) This estimate, requested by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, was used by Under Secretary of State Kenneth Rush on 9 June in a meeting with 10 principal State Department officials making preparations for the Summit. An NSC staff officer told us that the paper covered the subject very well. 25X1

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